

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

March 13, 2017

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to call your attention to the need for a comprehensive federal response to the recent avian influenza outbreak that has impacted farms in Tennessee and Wisconsin. The 2015 outbreak of avian influenza was a severe blow to the U.S. economy. In Minnesota, 108 farms were infected costing the state economy nearly \$650 million. It is therefore alarming that avian influenza has again been identified in U.S. poultry, with a highly pathogenic strain in Tennessee and a low pathogenic strain in Wisconsin. The particular strain that caused the 2015 outbreak has not yet been found in any poultry flocks this year, but that strain has been detected in wild ducks in Montana.

In 2015, the federal government was essential in coordinating the efforts to fight the outbreak. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has a protocol in place to address outbreaks of avian influenza viruses, and I call on you to move to rapidly implement those protocols. I also request that the Office of Management and Budget include sufficient funding in the Fiscal Year 2018 budget request to support avian influenza surveillance and outbreak response through the USDA. More broadly, I encourage you to work with Congress to make sure that all aspects of our defenses against the economic and public health threat from avian influenza and other foreign animal diseases impacting livestock are adequately funded. Combating the last avian influenza outbreak required \$1 billion in federal funding. The USDA currently has less than \$90 million available for such efforts.

Avian influenza has devastating impacts on the poultry industry, but it also poses a potential risk for human health. Fighting influenza and other infectious disease outbreaks requires a global effort, which is why I urge you to continue to expand funding for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Avian ID Pandemic Influenza and Other Emerging Threats Program. At least 60 percent of human infectious diseases originate in animals, which is why a combined effort of the medical, veterinary, environmental science and public health communities is required to effectively keep us safe. I also look forward to working with you on legislation to increase coordination, surveillance, and early detection of infectious disease through the One Health Act. Additionally, the U.S. needs to continue to lead the effort to find a global solution to this global problem. Avian species do not recognize national borders and all countries need to understand the vital role their biosecurity efforts play in protecting agriculture everywhere.

You inherit a system for fighting avian influenza outbreaks that was improved after the 2015 disaster through federal collaboration with state and local government, universities, and the poultry industry. One of the important pieces in this fight will be the newly expanded Minnesota Poultry Testing laboratory that opened in Willmar, Minnesota to conduct surveillance of highly

pathogenic avian influenza as part of the National Poultry Improvement Plan. However, we must not be caught flat-footed in responding to this agricultural emergency. I look forward to working with you to make sure that the federal government is prepared.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or Blaise Sheridan on my staff at (202) 224-5641.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Al Franken", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Senator Al Franken